to set aside about 32.5 million tones of coal for open sale to traders and actual users;

(b) if so, whether Government would allow only after taking out this coal from the essential commodities list;

(c) if so, whether the proposal which was mooted by Planning Commission has been approved by Government; and

(d) if so, by what time final decision in this regard is likely to be taken?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COAL (DR. DASARI NARAYANA RAO): (a) and (b) Colliery Control Order, 2000 places no restriction on trading of coal by private parties. Government has decided to sell 10 million tones of coal through electronic auction on Interest for the year 2005-06 on trial basis. In the quantity earmarked for e-auction, non-core consumers and non linked consumers, as also the traders can participate and bid for the quantity as per requirement from the preferred sources.

(c) and (d) The proposal of Planning Commission has been approved to the extent as given in reply to (a) above. The trial e-auction sale of coal has already started in some of the subsidiaries of Coal India Limited and from May, 2005 it is expected that all coal subsidiaries will have the trial e-auctions after completing the necessary formalities.

Import of Coal for Thermal Power Stations

4500. SHRI DATTA MEGHE: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether being unable to supply adequate quantity of coal to the power sector in the country, State Electricity Boards have

been asked to import coal to meet requirement of their thermal power stations;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether Government have taken any measures to increase productivity of coal; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COAL (DR. DASARI NARAYANA RAO): (a) and (b) Coal India Limited (CIL) has been able to by and large meet the requirements of coal of the thermal power stations as per the Annual Action Plan targets. The Power Sector has further been advised to import about 10 million tones of coal during the current financial year to meet their increasing demand for coal due to increased generation.

(c) and (d) CIL has taken up the following steps to reduce the gap between demand and indigenous supply and increase the productivity of coal:

a) 99 projects have been considered to be taken up during Tenth Plan

b) Allotment of coal blocks to end users for captive mining

c) Improvement in equipment utilization

d) Mechanization/modernization of existing mines

e) Timely implementation of projects

f) All new mines are being planned with mechanization

Deficiency of Coal for Steel Industry

4501. SHRI RAVULA CHANDRA SEKAR REDDY: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that there is deficiency in ensuring adequate and reliable supply of coal to the steel industry in the country;